Mindfulness-based Weight Management
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From Am I Hungry?
What to Do When Diets Don’t Work
by Michelle May, M.D.
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<td><strong>Why?</strong>&lt;br&gt;Why do I eat?</td>
<td>• Why do you think you eat?&lt;br&gt;• Are you aware of any situations or emotions that trigger you to want to eat when you aren’t hungry? (Examples: mealtimes, ballgames, certain people, stress, boredom, buffets, getting ready to start a diet?)&lt;br&gt;• Have you tried a lot of diets? What happened? How did they work for you long term? Why?</td>
<td>• Instinctive Eating Cycle: Hunger is the primary reason for eating; it is a primitive yet reliable way to regulate fuel intake.&lt;br&gt;• Overeating Cycle: Environmental and emotional cues can trigger an urge to eat (or continue eating) whether there is a physical need for fuel or not.&lt;br&gt;• Restrictive Eating Cycle: Diets can lead to preoccupation with food and feelings of deprivation that eventually lead to rebound overeating.</td>
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<td><strong>When?</strong>&lt;br&gt;When do I feel like eating?</td>
<td>• When do you feel like eating?&lt;br&gt;• How can you tell if you’re hungry?&lt;br&gt;• How could you distract yourself from eating until you get hungry?&lt;br&gt;• What could you do to cope more effectively with your emotional triggers for eating, for example: manage stress better, find a hobby, treat yourself to a hot bath, ask for help around the house?</td>
<td>• Ask yourself, “Am I hungry?” whenever you feel like eating. (Help them develop an internalized mechanism of knowing when to eat.)&lt;br&gt;• Hunger is a physical feeling; it is not the same thing as cravings, appetite or a desire to eat.&lt;br&gt;• Getting too hungry can be a trigger for overeating.&lt;br&gt;• Identify and reduce environmental cues for overeating, for example putting food out of sight, avoiding areas like the break room where food is likely to be found and ordering half-portions or sharing meals.&lt;br&gt;• Identify and cope with emotional triggers for overeating such as boredom, stress, sadness, anger, loneliness, celebrating, or rewarding yourself. (Refer as needed).</td>
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<td><strong>What?</strong>&lt;br&gt;What do I eat?</td>
<td>• What do you eat in a typical day?&lt;br&gt;• Do you restrict yourself from eating certain foods then later give-in and overeat those foods?&lt;br&gt;• Are there any areas of your diet that you think could be improved?&lt;br&gt;• What specific change would you like to make at this time?&lt;br&gt;• What health issues do you need to be aware of when choosing food (i.e. h/o high cholesterol, family h/o diabetes, BMI &gt; 25, etc.)&lt;br&gt;• What kind of beverages do you drink?&lt;br&gt;• What types of food do you want to eat when you’re eating for emotional reasons?</td>
<td>• All Foods Fit: there are no “good” foods or “bad” foods.&lt;br&gt;• Use balance, variety and moderation to guide your choices.&lt;br&gt;  o Balance - provide your body with the necessary nutrients. Balance eating for nourishment with eating for enjoyment.&lt;br&gt;  o Variety - eat a variety of foods from the different food groups and a variety of foods within each group.&lt;br&gt;  o Moderation – consider overall dietary intake, not just the portion size of one particular item.&lt;br&gt;• Ask yourself three questions when deciding what to eat: What do I want? What do I need? What do I have? Make small, focused, incremental changes, for example, increasing fruits and vegetables,</td>
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| How? How do I eat? | • Do you eat while distracted, for example, watching T.V., driving or working?  
• Do you think you eat fast?  
• Do you eat differently in private than you do in public? | • Eat mindfully; stay aware of your body, the food and the ambience.  
• Minimize distractions: turn off the TV, eat while seated at a table.  
• Savor each bite, noticing the appearance, aromas and flavors.  
• Put your fork down between bites. |
| --- | --- | --- |
| How Much? How much do I eat? | • How do you typically feel after eating?  
• How does it feel when you've eaten too much food?  
• What situations or emotions trigger overeating for you?  
• What could you do to address those triggers more effectively (for example, order less food, get up from the table, turn off the T.V., etc.) | • Your stomach is only about the size of your fist so it only takes about a palm-full of food to fill it.  
• Eating too much can cause you to feel uncomfortable and sluggish. (Help them develop an internalized mechanism of portion control.)  
• When you eat more than your body needs, it has no choice but to store the extra fuel.  
• Practice ending your meal when you are satisfied instead of stuffed. |
| Where? Where do I invest my energy? | • Where do you spend (or invest) the fuel you consume?  
• Are you physically active?  
• Do you limit your "screen time?"  
• Do you exercise? What do you like to do?  
• What else do you do? For example, do you like to play with your children, do you have hobbies, do you volunteer, do you like to travel?  
• Is there anything else you would like to do that you are not doing now? What are your goals for your relationships, your career, your life? | • The food you consume provides the energy and nutrients to live, work, play and exercise.  
• When you eat more than you need, the excess fuel will be stored to be used for fuel later.  
• Increased physical activity in daily living can have a significant impact on your fuel balance.  
• Exercise will improve your health, increase your stamina and function, and make you feel better.  
• When you invest your energy in living a full, balanced life, you are less likely to use food to meet your needs, therefore breaking an Overeating and Restrictive Eating Cycle. |

(Brief Interventions based on the Am I Hungry® Eating Cycle)